

‘Sweet sounds the ancient pibroch’: Authentic Ceòl Mór in New Zealand

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Abstract

Material describing the current cultural parameters, meaning and value of *piobaireachd* (also known as pibroch/*ceòl mór*), either within or beyond Scotland, is limited in its contemporary and global application. This research attempts to address such limitations by investigating *piobaireachd* in contemporary society from a cultural and social perspective. In particular it considers whether *piobaireachd* in New Zealand has been localised by investigating concepts of cultural authenticity embedded within musical sound. It draws upon existing scholarship and contributes towards the discourse on music and culture. This paper suggests we re-think *piobaireachd* as the authentic aural embodiment of the past, and recognise it as a subculture existing within a contemporary global context, where definitions vary and concepts of the past are subject to social influence. Cultural approaches offer much to the study of musics, including considerable potential for new interpretations, insights and directions for Highland bagpiping.

Keywords: *Piobaireachd*, *ceòl mór*, pibroch, authenticity, localisation, sound

Introduction

Material describing the current cultural parameters, meaning and value of *piobaireachd* (the ‘classical’ music of the Highland bagpipe), either within or beyond Scotland, is limited in its contemporary and global application. This research attempts to address such limitations by investigating *piobaireachd* in contemporary society from a cultural and social perspective. In particular it considers whether *piobaireachd* in New Zealand has been localised by investigating concepts of cultural authenticity embedded within musical sound. It draws upon existing scholarship and contributes towards the discourse on music and culture.

The Highland bagpipe has a distinctly recognisable and intriguing sound (Cannon 1988: 1; Cheape 2008: 141; Donaldson 2005: 9; Paterson 2009: 239-243). The instrument is considered to have emerged in the 15th century, when predecessor bagpipes were likely introduced to the Western and Northern areas of Scotland from Britain, Ireland, and/or Europe (Cheape 1999: 10, 13). Pre-existing traditions of poetry, folk song and harp music influenced the development of an artistic form of music for the adopted bagpipe in parallel with the development of the Highland bagpipe (Cheape 1999: 45, 62; Dickson 2006: 13). That music was *ceòl mór*,¹ commonly known to pipers today as ‘*piobaireachd*’ (Cooke n.d: Grove Music online).²

Piobaireachd is renowned for its abstraction and complexity, its slow tempo and its lengthy duration in comparison to the more familiar ‘*ceòl beag*’ repertoire frequently heard during ceremonies and parades, or through mass media. Notably, *piobaireachd* is somewhat devoid of the relatively repetitive and predictable rhythm, melody and form found in ‘*ceòl beag*’ - distinct both stylistically and conceptually from marches, dances, or songs. Enthusiasts consider *piobaireachd* music to listen to and admire; and for most outside of piping circles, a *piobaireachd* performance is a rare event to happen upon. (Cannon 1988: 45; Cheape 1999: 17).

Piobaireachd follow a theme and variations structure; where a melodic theme is laid out in the first section of the tune. This is then followed by a series of variation

sections, each generally repeating in sequence the melodic theme heard within the first, while also building to a crescendo with each passing variation through the addition of more complex ornamentation and an increased tempo (see Figure 4 for score notation of a tune). Generally, performances will last between ten and twenty minutes, depending on the tune and how it is performed. While each variation may feature varying rhythms, the sequence of melodic notes will not normally vary. As the sequence and length of the melodic theme, the range of ornaments and rhythmic devices used, and the number of variations may differ depending on the tune; *piobaireachd* can be defined as an adherence to repeating a melodic theme on the Highland bagpipe within an established tune structure – allowing *piobaireachd* to be defined as an art or ‘classical’ music.

In both academia and the performing community, *piobaireachd* is thus considered the ‘classical music of the Highland bagpipe’, based on a ‘theme and variations structure’, and in ‘an extended and complex form’ (Cannon 1988: 55-67; Cheape 2008: 3; Dickson 2006: 7-8; Donaldson 2000: 467, 2005: 27). As *piobaireachd* is understood as the original music for the Highland bagpipe, it is inferred as the most authentic of repertoire for the instrument and its performance community (Cannon 1988: 46; Cheape 1999: 62-73, 2008: 141-145; Dickson 2006: 7).^{3,4}

The legacy of Scottish trade and immigration; the impact of Empire and colonialism; the role of pipers in international military conflict; the romanticisation of Highland culture; as well as the enigma that is the Highland bagpipe, have all influenced the global spread of Highland bagpiping (Donaldson 1986; Grant 2013; Ho-Wai Chung 2001; Kay 2006; Loten 1995; Milosavljevic 2009: 36-52). In the early 1840s, Scottish migration to New Zealand established such communities as Waipu, Turakina, Dunedin, and Invercargill (Milosavljevic & Johnson 2012: 40). Despite this, Highland piping is seldom recorded prior to the early 1860s.^{5,6} Definitive records of Highland piping emerge after the arrival of a more eclectic mix of Scots, largely driven by the discovery of gold in Central Otago in 1861 (Coleman 1996: 16). This altered the dynamic of many small, insular and religious communities (such as Dunedin) to become more poly-Scottish, particularly due to the influx of Scots and their descendants via Australia and America (Coleman 1996: 17). To celebrate local community and cultural identity, the first annual Highland Games were held in New Zealand in 1863 in Dunedin, and soon spread to other communities nationally (Milosavljevic & Johnson 2012: 43-44; Pearce 1976: 161). By 1864, these festivals included competitive solo Highland piping, with *piobaireachd* being a noted feature (Coleman 1996: 584).

Since the mid-20th century, pipers from New Zealand have travelled to Scotland to compete in *piobaireachd* events with considerable success, fostering a reputation for New Zealand pipers to be of quality (Coleman 2003: 152). Such individuals have been venerated as *piobaireachd* authorities internationally.⁷ Their accessibility and influence through piping organisations within New Zealand has been integral to the development of *piobaireachd* and piping on a national scale (Milosavljevic & Johnson 2012). Today, *piobaireachd* is a major part of competitive solo piping festivals in New Zealand,⁸ and a number of performers continue to travel to Scotland on a regular basis in order to learn and perform in the Scottish Highland bagpiping scene. See Table 1.

Table 1. New Zealand successes in the prestigious Scottish Gold Medal *piobaireachd* events at the Northern Meeting (Inverness) and Argyllshire Gathering (Oban).⁹

Argyllshire Gathering – Oban	Northern Meeting - Inverness
1980 Murray Henderson	1958 Lewis Turrell
1987 John Hanning	1975 Murray Henderson
2006 Greg Wilson	1979 Donald Bain
2007 Richard Hawke	1990 Greg Wilson

Given that *piobaireachd* has been present within New Zealand for at least 150 years (Coleman 1996, 584); given considerable geographic isolation from the cultural 'homeland' (Scotland); given New Zealand's unique cultural footprint (Immigration New Zealand 2012: web source; New Zealand tourism guide n.d: web source; Phillips 2013: web source); and given social and cultural differences between Scotland and New Zealand (Whatley 2000; Belich 2001; Gardiner 2005); this research considers the local character of *piobaireachd* in New Zealand today.

Although no literature has specifically investigated *piobaireachd* within New Zealand, a small number of works show a strong link between Highland piping and New Zealand society, supporting localisation in the definition, boundaries, and histories of Highland bagpiping (Coleman 1996, 2003; Milosavljevic 2009; Milosavljevic & Johnson 2012). There is a considerable body of literature regarding Highland piping beyond New Zealand. This includes collections of *piobaireachd* score notations, which contain description and discussion of the instrument, its music, and how to perform. However these are accepted to be rife with romanticisation, editorialisation, and speculation that can be confusing and contradictory (Blankenhorn 1978; Campsie 1980; Cannon 1995; Cheape 1999: 24; Haddow 1982).

Recent studies have used a more critical approach, featuring experience based research and insider interpretations. In particular Cannon (1995) provides a literature review of *piobaireachd*, acknowledging a lack of cultural understanding. Gibson (1998) explores social and cultural changes for Highland piping in Scotland from 1745 to 1945. Cheape (1999 & 2008) tracks the emergence of the Highland bagpipe alongside *piobaireachd*, and developments in wider Gaelic society. Donaldson (2000, 2005) provides cursory cultural descriptions of *piobaireachd* in lay terms. McKerrell (2005) explores sound aesthetics and expressions of self through instrumental sound for contemporary pipers in Scotland in solo light music. Dickson (2006) challenges contemporary understandings of the past for Highland piping in Scotland, illustrating historical local variance. While Dickson's (2009) edited volume compiles the most diverse methodological analysis of Highland bagpiping to date, with some discussion of *piobaireachd*.

Further afield, Gibson (2002) and Shears (2009) both offer a history of Highland piping in Nova Scotia, examining 'tradition' and critiquing Highland piping within Scotland. Loten (1995) examines contemporary solo piping in Ontario and introduces the concept of a distinct 'Canadian Scottish piping'. Ho Wai-Chung (2001) considers Highland bagpiping in Hong Kong, illustrating diversity and divergence of piping cultures beyond Scotland.

While a wealth of work has thus identified aspects of Highland bagpipe history and culture,¹⁰ few examples have dedicated their focus to exploring *piobaireachd*

culturally - accepting and perpetuating historical and musicological definitions. Few have taken into account Highland bagpiping or *piobaireachd* beyond Scotland; ignoring globalisation and diaspora; maintaining a Eurocentrism prevalent in Highland bagpiping scholarship; and inferring universality of Highland bagpiping. Few appear to have considered a focus on the current cultural content of Highland bagpiping. A significant number of these works are historical and musicological in design: interpreting scant and disparate records; analysing westernised scores; or speculating in order to explain Highland bagpiping. These provide for very little consideration of *piobaireachd* as practiced by pipers today. However, they do provide direction for this research. Those of particular insight are ethnocentric in consideration, ethnographic in design, and ethnomusicological in discipline.

Method

Ample studies within ethnomusicological discourse acknowledge the importance of sound as a research focus (Duffy 1999; Feld 1982; Meintjes 2003; Qureshi 1987; Scott-Maxwell 2008; Slobin 1993; Taylor 2001). This paper considers the concept of authentic sound for contemporary *piobaireachd* within New Zealand.¹¹ Authentic *piobaireachd* performance has an existing public discourse. This can be found in album reviews (Paterson 2006), competition report sheets (Figure 1), items within periodicals (such as 'Piping Times'), other reception materials, musicological research pieces (Pipes/Drums 2014), and within manuscript collections (The Piobaireachd Society 1925). Indeed, these are valuable for indicating interpretations of authentic sound. Yet in much of this work sources or context are not identified or taken into consideration. Such interpretations are contestable, diverse and subjective, and their variety based on contextual factors limit their validity for the present study.

Despite a considerable amount of literature having studied *piobaireachd* (Cannon 1995),¹² little consideration has been given to the cultural parameters of sound - where it is heard, who hears it, and what that sound means. Whittier wrote 'Sweet sounds the ancient pibroch', claiming *piobaireachd* as a benchmark for pleasant sounding music of antiquity (Whittier 1884: 178). McClellan refers to the aural qualities of *piobaireachd* as 'inimitable', although he does not offer further description (McClellan 2009: 331). Insider knowledge identifies that aficionados of *piobaireachd* consider its sound to be a unique and culturally revered sonic experience; as well as a more acquired and refined taste than other varieties of Highland bagpiping. Yet *piobaireachd* is relatively unknown outside of the small solo piping community, treated as peripheral by wider Highland piping cultural participants (Coleman 2003: 133). Thus *piobaireachd*'s sound is largely unheard in New Zealand society - likely considered abstract; elitist; and inaccessible by the majority of performers, Highland piping enthusiasts and members of the public. Nevertheless, it appears that for an influential few within the international Highland piping community, *piobaireachd* is considered sacrosanct (Donaldson 2005: 26).

This paper not only explores the production of sound and demonstration of repertoire, it also considers the values embedded within sound, and the concepts that arrange and give sound meaning (Nettl 2005: 36). 'Music' can include sounds that are not an obvious or explicit part of the definition of music for researchers (Nettl 2005: 34), thus cultural immersion and qualitative data are necessary for an accurate exploration. Employing a tripartite approach, this research is ethnographic in design, principally relying on interview data. Between 2011 and 2013 extended interviews were undertaken with contemporary elite New Zealand performers, comprising a selection of winners of the *Comunn na Piobaireachd* Gold Medal and Gold Clasp *piobaireachd* events at the Hawkes Bay Highland Games from the previous 10 years.¹³ Interviews followed a semi-structured 'natural conversation' about *piobaireachd*.¹⁴ Interview data

were further supported by participant observations,¹⁵ insider experience,¹⁶ and literature in order to make sense of, and negotiate the data gathered.¹⁷

In order for 'music' to be identified as such, certain qualities of sound must be acceptable to cultural participants (Nettl 2005: 29). Thus musical sound must have a cultural value, enabling scrutiny of 'authenticity'. Middleton, believes 'authenticity' to be the source of musical function and value (Middleton 1990: 127). Wade considers 'tradition' and 'authenticity' interchangeable, with both indicating strong links between the cultural present and past (Wade 2009: 183). Moore debates authenticity to be interpretive "made and fought for from within a cultural and ... historicised position" (Moore 2002: 209-210); a subjective interpretation of cultural value made by the individual (Moore 2002: 220-221). This paper will therefore explore how people perceive and arrange 'authenticity' in association with sound.¹⁸

Nettl argues, "if there is anything really stable in the musics of the world, it is the constant existence of change" (Nettl 2005: 202). The cultural analysis of music need recognise the flow of knowledge over, across, through, within, between, and/or around 'domains of culture' (Biddle & Knights 2007; Kartomi 1981: 234; Nettl 2005: 290; Slobin 1992: 5; Wade 2009: 186). Sound can represent the cultures that influence its production and interpretation, and a variety of places and cultures can be represented and read in musical sound (Duffy 1999; Slobin 1993; Stokes 1994).

Highland bagpiping has previously been considered culturally,¹⁹ and shown to operate as a diaspora (Grant 2013: 8; Milosavljevic 2009: 15). Building on this, the current research theorises that *piobaireachd* within New Zealand is localised to the extent that it sounds different from *piobaireachd* within Scotland, and that it sounds unique. To address such a theory, this paper will explore 'authentic' sound. Given a paucity of cultural research on contemporary *piobaireachd* sound, and given difficulties in observing sound, this will primarily be explored through interview data. This allows for discussion of whether *piobaireachd* sound is localised (or not), while subsequent research may consider the processes that have lead to this paper's findings. This was a necessary scope given the complexity of *piobaireachd* sound and the limitations of existing *piobaireachd* discourse.

This paper serves as an introduction to wider concerns for Highland bagpiping. Ethnomusicological scholarship has established that social and cultural themes concerning the past, diaspora, globalisation, postcolonialism, community, politics, economy, nationalism, and identity (among others) can be embedded within music (Biddle & Knights 2007; Eisentraut 2001; Gerstin 1998; Johnson 2012; Keister 2008; Manuel 1997; Monson 2000; Meintjes 2003; Myers 1998; O'Flynn 2007; Ramnarine 2004; Scott-Maxwell 2008; Slobin 1994; Stokes 1994; Zuberi 2007). While these may suggest tantalising lines of enquiry for Highland bagpiping, rather than exploring and discussing them in great depth here, this paper will act as an initial step towards such themes by first establishing what can be found within the sound of *piobaireachd*. Further manuscripts on these topics will follow.

Exploring *Piobaireachd* Sound

Despite performance driving *piobaireachd* participation, it equates to a much smaller proportion of time than pedagogy and rehearsal. The competitive nature of solo piping within New Zealand means elite pipers normally undertake pedagogy for future performances months in advance, and rehearse in a regular schedule that includes an hour or more daily. Drawing on Small's (1998) concept of 'musicking',²⁰ insider experience identifies pedagogy contributing to approximately fifteen percent, practice to eighty percent, and performance to five percent of *piobaireachd* musicking time. Yet, despite making up the least proportion in terms of time, performance is the primary objective of pedagogy and practice, and is definitive for *piobaireachd*. Hence performance is the primary focus of interview participants and was a predominant

focus for participant observations. Within New Zealand, *piobaireachd* performance is heavily influenced by festivals for competitive performance, which provide the most common and accessible venue for formal performance.²¹

Interviews sought participants' experiences with *piobaireachd*. Accordingly *piobaireachd* sound was described as involving various sound components.

[For *piobaireachd*] ... you're looking at a musical ideal from a bagpipe, technique and expression point of view, musical expression... [and] there's a number of things that go in to make that up (Participant 5).

This statement is characteristic of how interview participants' considered *piobaireachd* sound and is further supported by participant observations, field documents (see Figure 1), and insider knowledge.

HAWKE'S BAY EASTER HIGHLAND GAMES

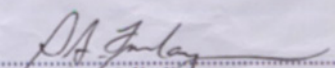
ADJUDICATOR'S REPORT SHEET

Name of Event GOLD MEDAL Competitor's No.

Age Group MACCORMACK'S SWEETHEARTS

Urtar	$\frac{1}{3}$	Could have flowed better, especially last bar of each line. Drums going 7/6.
Var I	$\frac{1}{3}$	
Var II	$\frac{1}{3}$	
Var III	$\frac{1}{3}$	
Var III	$\frac{1}{3}$	
T	$\frac{1}{3}$	
T'	$\frac{1}{3}$	
C	$\frac{1}{3}$	Some Comharach Fosgailte movements muffled.
C'	$\frac{1}{3}$	
		Bar 4 Line 2 played B-sani instead of C.

Total Points


 D.A. Farley
 Adjudicator

Copy World

Figure 1. A report sheet written by an adjudicator of a competitive *piobaireachd* event. This shows the judge's interpretation of aural authenticity presented within a particular competitor's performance.²²

This research considered three key components of *piobaireachd* sound - where 'bagpipe' equates to instrument sound, 'technique' to technical sound, and 'expression' to musical concepts. Instrument sound involves the inherent aural characteristics of the instrument, the combined result of air being forced through the 4 differing sound appendages of the Highland bagpipe, producing and comprising the sounds of the chanter and drones. Technical sound relates to the aural articulation of notes and ornaments, the result of fingers covering and uncovering holes on the chanter, producing the melodic tones of the Highland bagpipe (Cheape 1999: 10-17; Donaldson 2005: 1-13). Musical concepts drive the production of technical sound and instrument sound, predetermining their arrangement and giving them meaning within the context of *piobaireachd* performance (Donaldson 2005: 27-31). As such there is complexity in the variety of techniques, materials and repertoires used in sound production. Nevertheless, these three fundamental sound components provide a useful framework for investigating *piobaireachd* sound.

Instrument Sound

Interview participants conveyed that a 'good' sounding instrument allowed them to appreciate a *piobaireachd*, and was the 'bottom rung' of an authentic performance.

When they blow up and start their tune, the instrument is most important... Even when they're tuning up [I'm] listening to see if they've got a good pipe. The ideal is a clean melodic tune with pipes staying in tune for the whole piobaireachd (Participant 3).

In this sense, 'good' instrument sound is a necessity of authentic performance. This limits *piobaireachd* performance to the Highland bagpipe, reflecting a local cultural understanding of *piobaireachd* as the original music for this instrument. Authentic instrument sound for *piobaireachd* provided interview participants with a different level of satisfaction than for other styles of Highland piping, such as solo light music or pipe bands.

Bands are all about volume and clarity. When I think about piobaireachd, it's more about finesse; it's a lovely sweet gift that you're trying to create. They are completely separate things... I get a lot of satisfaction and enjoyment out of playing a good piobaireachd... you know if you're playing [and] you've got your pipes humming... little things like that make it really special (Participant 1).

Seemingly, there is some complexity to authentic instrument sound for *piobaireachd* performance. Interview participants consistently indicated that authenticity of instrument sound is a discursive concept. For them, an authentic instrument is faithful to previously established cultural aesthetics of instrument sound. In obtaining authentic instrument sound, performers must be able to demonstrate instrumental proficiency and mastery.

Interview participants had all performed in Scotland and were asked to reflect on their experiences. Some spoke of a better instrument sound in Scotland:

Those pipes [in Scotland] were just fantastic. It's always a bit of a wakeup call when you hear a good instrument... you always go back and second guess what you've got going [in New Zealand]. Could you refine it a bit more? It's that whole exposure of it, far more exposure on a far more regular basis [in Scotland] (Participant 4).

Others suggested that conditions for performance in Scotland made acquiring authentic instrument sound more difficult than in New Zealand:

Anywhere you go there's different conditions. You've got to get a feel for what your pipes are going to do in certain conditions. In a New Zealand summer you might be able to get 30 – 50 minutes out of your pipes, whereas a cold day up in Inverness [Scotland] you'll probably only get 20 minutes (Participant 3).

I enjoy indoors more ... in Scotland, a lot of it's outside with highland games... sometimes playing is not quite so enjoyable if it's raining and [event organisers] stick with it outside. Sometimes it's rough but there's plenty of good outdoor games as well that are very pleasant to play at (Participant 5).

Participants believed instrument sound for *piobaireachd* in Scotland was generally better than that heard in New Zealand. Yet, paradoxically instrument sound in Scotland was also more susceptible to poorer performance conditions attributed to a greater number of outdoor festivals in Scotland, where the majority of these took place in fluctuating weather conditions. In New Zealand there are fewer performance opportunities for *piobaireachd* and the majority of these are placed indoors. Thus there is a link between local climate, local festivals, and instrument sound.

When asked whether *piobaireachd* in New Zealand has undergone changes, participants indicated improvements in the standard of instrument sound. The following comment is representative of all interview participants.

There's more players who can play a good tune. The standard of the instrument's sound is better than when I was a kid. When my dad was playing, there were a lot of pipes that weren't up to standard. I think it's better and technically I think there are more people working harder at it. (Participant 2).

Such changes are associated with performers having greater access to modern instrument components resulting in more stable, consistent and authentic instrument sound.²³ This is considered 'good' for *piobaireachd* in New Zealand today because performances are at a higher standard of instrument sound than they have previously been, or at least, closer to some understanding of culturally ideal instrument sound.



Figure 2. A Ross™ Suede Canister bagpipe bag with canister system extending out through the zip access opening. An example of a modern instrument component that is argued to have largely increased the quality of instrument sound heard within New Zealand today.²⁴

Authentic instrument sound is fundamental for a 'good' performance - dependent on a performer's instrument materials, his or her level of instrument proficiency, and relative to local performance contexts. Local conditions impact instrument sound for *piobaireachd* and interview participants indicate that differences exist between New Zealand and Scotland regarding the frequency of, and conditions for, performance. Instrument sound in Scotland is of a higher standard in general than in New Zealand, and thus more authentic, which implies a transcultural relationship where instrument sound in Scotland provides an international benchmark of quality, which the *piobaireachd* scene in New Zealand appears to have come closer to. Such responses infer significant social influences upon instrument sound for *piobaireachd* in New Zealand. However, while interview participants indicate that instrument sound is somewhat localised to New Zealand, acknowledged differences in the sound of *piobaireachd* instruments between New Zealand and Scotland were not defined.²⁵

Technical Sound

Technique was also described as an important component of performance. Technical sounds are accepted as the articulation of chanter sounds within performance, presented as 'notes' and 'ornaments' (Cannon 1988: 31-36). Interview data for technical sound were comparatively limited. Insider knowledge suggests that pipers consider technical sounds are determined by the physiological attributes of a

piper's finger technique, which is developed through the player's commitment to practicing the articulation of technical sounds. These factors are not necessarily connected to such concepts as place, isolation, or identity; rather, interview participants simply saw technical sound as the aural articulation of a tune's melody on the Highland bagpipe. Localised articulation of authentic finger technique does not appear to be something they had considered.²⁶

Common cultural terms used in interviews to describe *piobaireachd* notes included 'theme notes', 'cut notes' and 'non thematic notes'; while ornaments included 'gracenote', '*taorluath*', '*crunluath*', '*birl*', '*airdrie*', and 'throw on D'. Cannon (1988), Collinson (1975) and Donaldson (2000, 2005) identify such terms being used for Highland bagpiping from a (presumably) Scottish perspective, indicating a consistency of terminology for *piobaireachd* technical sound between New Zealand and Scotland.

The 'clear' articulation of notes and ornaments was a key focus for interview participants in discussing *piobaireachd* performance.

Technique is something in piobaireachd as well. I wouldn't say I'm perfect but I do a fair bit of technique practice on crunluaths²⁷ to make sure I'm hearing all the sounds (Participant 3).

High quality technical sounds were considered a necessity for a *piobaireachd* performance to be aurally acceptable - requiring rapid, controlled and well-practised finger technique. In order to consistently produce such quality, pipers acknowledged that *piobaireachd* is considerably more demanding of technique consistency than other forms of piping:

Piobaireachd is fantastic, fantastic for everything to do with piping – stamina, technique, it's good (Participant 8).

In New Zealand *piobaireachd* fulfils a role as an important pathway for the development of 'good' technique, important for high level piping development. When asked regarding localised technique, two participants indicated that pipers in New Zealand might perform *piobaireachd* technical sounds differently.

Here in New Zealand some people struggle with technique either in the Crunluath [section] or the [Crunluath] a Mach [section] or something like that (Participant 3).

In some places you had Tutor X, who had a kernel of truth on things but in actual fact he extrapolates that on what he's been taught and you get a different interpretation of what's right, which is where we've gone in some places in New Zealand (Participant 5).

Such insightful responses were rare - with most participants equivocal on this matter. Nonetheless, these observations suggest that technical sounds used in *piobaireachd* might have been localised to New Zealand previously. Interview participants associated this with the influence of a particular individual in a certain area (such as a local tutor), but were dismissive as to whether this reflected New Zealand in any way. Despite further prompting, participants were reticent and unsure regarding localised technique, offering little further information.

Most considered that technical sound in New Zealand was consistent with current

international standards. This supports a universal definition for *piobaireachd* sound aesthetics represented within literature. However, localisation of technical sound within New Zealand does have precedent as indicated in these interviews. Further, Dickson (2006) describes distinct differences in technique characteristic of local Highland piping communities in Scotland prior to the turn of the 20th century. Such localised traits came to be considered flawed as a national homogeneity of Highland piping culture took shape in Scotland. This exposed local culture to its distinctiveness and allowed for such ‘flawed’ cultural practices to be acknowledged and eventually stamped out (Dickson 2006: 105-123).²⁸

Authenticity of *piobaireachd* sound demands a standard and variety of technical sounds not evident for other forms of Highland piping in New Zealand, illustrating the enigmatic nature of *piobaireachd* to Highland piping culture. Interview participants consider *piobaireachd* to foster ideal finger technique in pipers, allowing them to produce authentic articulation of notes and ornaments, not just for *piobaireachd* but also for Highland piping in general. Such authenticity of technical sound is a key factor for pipers choosing tunes to perform from the *piobaireachd* repertoire and also plays a major part in determining how *piobaireachd* performances are interpreted.



Figure 3. Two close-up photos illustrating Highland bagpipe finger technique. Note slight variation in finger properties, particularly rigidity.²⁹

Differences exist in the technical sounds of performers, relating to their strengths and weaknesses in articulating notes and ornaments. While some participants indicated an historical localisation of technical sound within New Zealand, these participants also suggested that such localisation was no longer evident. They acknowledged differences between pipers today and between regional communities of pipers in the past, yet they did not actually define those differences in clear terms. As such, localisation of technical sound still awaits definition.

Meaning is embodied through the demonstration of authentic technical sound,

allowing cultural participants to value one performance as being more culturally 'true' than another. The cultural past is thus manifest within technical sounds used for *piobaireachd* in New Zealand. Yet while interview participants have indicated that authenticity of sound is a major factor in *piobaireachd* performance, authentic technical sound remains undefined beyond being 'good' and 'clear'.³⁰

Despite limitations, this discussion shows the importance of analysing finger technique. Technical sound in a performance is consecutive and dependent on consistency of technique throughout the entirety of a performance, not just at specific moments. Technical sounds heard within a performance are unlikely to be identical, as each is comprised of a unique combination of note sounds and ornament sounds specific to a given performance, by a given performer. Thus performance identity is inseparable from a performer's technical sound, inevitably related to physiological attributes, pedagogical instruction, and practice rehearsal. This complexity of contributing factors provides ample potential for technical sound in New Zealand to be localised.³¹

Technical sound is characteristic and necessary within performance, yet ultimately it serves as the articulation of repertoire through the generation of melodic sounds. Interview participants fell short of explicitly indicating how the sounds of instrument and technique used for *piobaireachd* had the capacity to be different in New Zealand. They were, however, much more descriptive when discussing the concepts that drive such sound production.

Musical Concepts

A study of musical culture must consider conceptualisations of 'music' - the factors that drive participants to create and arrange musical sound (Nettl 2005: 17). It "involves the way people think about music in the broadest terms" (Nettl 2005: 37). Musical concepts may be the most fruitful area for ethnomusicological enquiry: "Without concepts... music sound cannot be produced. It is at this level that the values about music are found, and it is precisely these values that filter upward through the system to effect the final product" (Meriam 1964: 33). In *piobaireachd* these concepts are the arrangements of a combination of specific ornaments and notes, considered as the 'grammar' and 'syntax' of music (Nettl 2005: 69).

Some have written of the musical concepts that define *piobaireachd*, indicating complexity and distinction (Cannon 1988: 55-72; McClellan 2009: 303-357). Examples exist of westernised score analyses of *piobaireachd*, however, little research has considered perceptions of musical concepts through conversation with culture bearers. This contributes to a divide between studying the forms and origins of music, and the functions and meanings of music (Meriam 1964). Musical concepts are thus a necessary part of any cultural study of *piobaireachd*, and therefore this section explores perceptions of authenticity and localisation in relation to musical concepts.

Interview responses, participant observations, field documents (see Figure 1), and previously discussed components of instrument and technical sounds, suggest that musical concepts for *piobaireachd* are complex. One participant offered:

With light music, there are more beats. They're faster tunes - marches, strathspeys, reels. With piobaireachd there's no real beat. You can't march to piobaireachd. They're two quite different disciplines (Participant 3).

Musical concepts are a definitive feature of *piobaireachd*, underpinning performance entirely - dictating both what a 'tune' is, as well as how it will be, and should be performed (McClellan 2009). They refer to the arrangement, sequence and timing of notes and ornaments, as a rendition of tunes from the *piobaireachd* cannon,

as a unique interpretation by a performer in a performance. Musical concepts are the combined result of what will be discussed as 'repertoire' and 'expression'. Repertoire concepts are the 'what is played' of a performance, determining the sequence of notes and ornaments used within any given performance, and encompassing such terms such as 'tune', 'theme', 'setting', and 'structure'. Expression concepts are the 'how it is played' of a performance, referring to the presentation of a tune's sequence of notes and ornaments over a performance's duration. 'Expression' is an overarching concept widely used in piping to encompass such key terms as 'tempo', 'pulsing', 'phrasing', and 'rhythm'. It is the fundamental capacity to present the repertoire concepts of a tune in an intimate, individual and expressive manner (McClellan 2009: 303). Unlike repertoire concepts, expression concepts are not predetermined by score notation, but are implied and open for unique interpretation by performers. Explicit descriptions of authentic musical concepts for *piobaireachd* are not evident in published literature,³² probably due to their apparent complexity to cultural outsiders (McClellan 2009), and the variety of styles and differences in opinion that are held by cultural insiders.

These concepts allow for discussion of musicality and style, authenticity and preference, accessibility and understanding, transculturalism and localisation. Where aspects of repertoire concepts were 'authentic' according to the tune, theme, setting, and structure; and where expression concepts were 'authentic' according to the tempo, pulses, phrasing, and rhythm; interview participants thought that a performance could then be deemed to be 'musical', and belong to a particular 'style'.

Participants were explicitly asked whether differences existed in *piobaireachd* performances between New Zealand and Scotland, where some identified musical concepts as a way in which they differ. One participant responded:

'The Battle of the Strome' is a good example. I used to hold the E cadences ... Just before I went to Scotland I found that that's not how it's played on the competition circuit [in Scotland]. Tutor X cuts the cadence straight to the Low A. That made a big difference so I had to adjust and that's how everyone played it [in Scotland] (Participant 1).

While a different participant offered:

The tune's got these pause things, so I was deciding how I was going to play those. I really liked it like that. In Scotland, most [performers] had ignored it like that and were playing it as you would normally (Participant 2).

Comments such as these suggest differences in how performers in Scotland demonstrate musical concepts compared to New Zealand performers. However, while some were willing to suggest such differences, others were less supportive.

We're on the same page... There's not a dramatic contrast from what the Scots are doing compared with what we're doing. We're lucky enough to have a few big names [international authorities] in New Zealand that know how it's done and are willing to pass on their knowledge (Participant 3).

Many participants believed *piobaireachd* in New Zealand to be on par with *piobaireachd* in Scotland in terms of musicality and style. Although participants offered contradictory information regarding whether musical concepts used for performance in New Zealand were different from those used in Scotland, this is worth further consideration.



Figure 4. Score notations in use. Image on the left depicts the use of notation by judges of a competitive *piobaireachd* event, where they check repertoire concepts being performed in accordance with notation of that particular tune. Image on the right shows codified markings on the score, which illustrate the owner's particular interpretation of authentic expression concepts. This acts as a visual interpretation of authentic musical concepts. ³³

Participants discussed local differences in the accessibility of specific *piobaireachd* tunes to performers, and accessibility of *piobaireachd* performances in general to non-performers. McClellan (2009) (presumably from a Scottish perspective) considers such inaccessibility to partially be the result of abstract and implicit musical concepts in *piobaireachd*. Comparing accessibility and participation in both New Zealand and Scotland, interview participants considered appreciation by non-performers to be similar, and musical concepts just as complex and obscure in wider Highland bagpiping in Scotland as in New Zealand. However, they did determine that there were a greater number of contexts for performance of *piobaireachd* in Scotland, providing greater opportunity for *piobaireachd* to be accessed by a greater number and proportion of cultural participants. Thus comparatively, *piobaireachd* within New Zealand may be considered more obscure within the local Highland bagpiping community and wider society than it is in Scotland.

Interview participants were asked whether there was a difference in musical concepts between performers in New Zealand and performers in Scotland. Some

were willing to demonstrate how the *piobaireachd* performed in Scotland featured different musical concepts to those they used; and some felt there were differences in how the musical concepts within tunes were performed in New Zealand and in Scotland. However, they were not willing to suggest that this represented New Zealand in any way, was typical of New Zealand performers, or was the result of some form of localisation. Overall they all appeared equivocal about this matter, and all went so far as suggesting that musical concepts for *piobaireachd* in New Zealand were more or less 'identical' to those in Scotland. Therefore, no convincing argument can be made for New Zealand having localised *piobaireachd* musical concepts.³⁴

Conclusion: Considering *Piobaireachd* Sound

Instrument sound, technical sound and musical concepts encompass the aural elements of *piobaireachd* within New Zealand. Considerable knowledge and practical skill are required in order to achieve authentic sound from them. Results identify complexity in *piobaireachd* sound, suggesting a hierarchy to this sound structure. Instrument sound acts as the foundation for technical sound, itself a foundation for musical concepts, while the demonstration of musical concepts drives cultural participation.

It is important to note that, despite being analysed separately here, such components of sound are not independent in the context of performance - they are interrelated and co-dependent. Likewise, the sound of *piobaireachd* has been separated from the material factors that produce it, the visual factors that accompany it, and from its social and cultural transmission. Yet neither *piobaireachd* nor Highland bagpiping is purely aural, where meaning and value is not solely reliant on innate and objective qualities of sound. That is, the meaning and value found within musical sound, is interpretive, subjective and context dependent, and thus cannot be divorced from participation.

Comparing previous work on *piobaireachd* and Highland bagpiping to this study reveals issues. Other authors (for whatever reason) have not considered transculturalism in the (post)modern world – a consideration now expected in music studies. By focusing on historical and musical definitions from an objective and universal point of view, out of a time and place context, and without considering social and cultural factors, they have denied global, contemporary and contentious interpretations of Highland bagpiping. This research does not hold the answer to the questions such previous work has asked, particularly as it is subject to the limitations of the study that informs it (see Milosavljevic 2014). Rather, this paper simply suggests that Highland bagpiping has not been understood. Presuming the objectivity of music is an error, a misunderstanding, and a misrepresentation. This paper demonstrates that, while the sound of *piobaireachd* may represent conceptualisations of Scotland, it remains feasible that New Zealand identity (or other identities) could also be reflected in the sound of *piobaireachd*. Further, it appears that definitions of Highland bagpiping can be diverse, dynamic and localised in the contemporary world.

While *piobaireachd* is linked to other forms of Highland bagpiping, participants argued that *piobaireachd* was the most 'authentic' form. Production of authentic *piobaireachd* sound implies an ability to demonstrate authenticity in Highland bagpipe culture in general. Beyond similarities and differences between *piobaireachd* and Highland bagpiping in New Zealand, there are consistencies and contrasts between the sound of *piobaireachd* in New Zealand and Scotland, indicating a complex transcultural relationship that will require further research to understand. This suggests a definition of *piobaireachd* in New Zealand as both a subculture of Highland bagpiping on a national scale, and a subculture of *piobaireachd* on a global scale. It implies a 'micromusicality' (Slobin 1993) to the sound of *piobaireachd*,

embedded in all of the various components of its aural demonstration, as well as the factors that generate sound in performance and give that sound meaning. This research calls for *piobaireachd* and Highland piping in general to be considered in cultural terms and in relation to global flows of culture.

The demonstration of *piobaireachd* references the cultural past - embedded in such concepts as 'good', 'right' and 'authentic' sound. Such authenticity is an individually understood benchmark derived from sounds an individual has previously experienced and understood within a social context. Audiences arrange performances within a hierarchy of demonstrated cultural authenticity that necessarily involves a consideration of sound. Being deemed to 'sound authentic' suggests that performers have drawn upon sonic signifiers that are associated with long established practices. The establishment and maintenance of these associations depend upon the player's participation within the social hierarchy that determines that definition of cultural authenticity. By participating competitively, players are bound to the cultural values of the competition and community, and effectively embody those values themselves. In practice, an effective performance of authenticity requires balancing chanter and drone sounds, clear articulation of notes and ornaments, and demonstrating acceptable musicality and style. However, despite this definition of authentic *piobaireachd* sound in New Zealand, quantifiable parameters of authentic acoustic properties remain elusive and undefined.³⁵

Authenticity is subjective, yet also socially influenced, where the same sound can be authentic to some and inauthentic to others. Importantly, sound cannot be authentic in itself, rather, its value relates to how it is interpreted in diverse contexts. This suggests social and cultural influences to be more important for determining authenticity than some innate and objective quality, and future research will thus necessarily consider such influences.

Piobaireachd draws together a global community of practice that involves a transcultural connection between New Zealand and Scotland. Indeed, *piobaireachd* is a globalised tradition, yet differences do exist between the 'sounds' of *piobaireachd* in New Zealand and Scotland. Local conditions for performance influence how instruments sound, local authorities may teach divergent interpretations of technique, while musical concepts for *piobaireachd* in New Zealand are sometimes different to those used in Scotland. Ultimately however, standards for authentic *piobaireachd* sound in New Zealand appear no different to those in Scotland, and while there is some evidence for *piobaireachd* being localised to New Zealand, concretely defining such localisation in terms of sound remains elusive. In the face of cultural dynamics, known local influences, significant geographic isolation, considerable social differences, temporality, and global cultural flow, authentic sound for *piobaireachd* within New Zealand appears synonymous with that in Scotland. Further research will thus explore the contemporary influences that oppose localisation.

The current population of Scotland is just over five million (Ancien et al. 2009: 27); while an ancestral diaspora as large as fifty million claims connection to Scotland (Rutherford 2009: 9); and a Highland bagpiping diaspora operating at times beyond conceptualisations of Scotland remains uncharted. Here, culture exists as globalised, adopted and appropriated in diverse local contexts that extend, challenge, and nuance 'Scotland'. These diaspora await further exploration, offering points of referential comparison, contesting concepts of ownership, affirming (or denying) collective belonging, expressing local identity, debating authenticity, and facilitating critique of 'self'. Given past and present cultural change and exchange, diaspora offer considerable potential for new interpretations, insights and directions for Highland bagpiping.

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¹ Distinct from ‘*ceòl beag*’, which translates literally to ‘small music’, and encompasses a different repertoire comprised of dance tunes, song airs and military marches (Cooke 1975-1976: 93). The *ceòl beag* repertoire is much more accessible and known, and includes such commonly heard tunes as Amazing Grace, Scotland the Brave, and the Green Hills of Tyrol.

² Often anglicised in academia as ‘pibroch’. A Gaelic term that translates literally to ‘piping’, what pipers do, to the act of piping (Donaldson 2000: 4). Cooke describes ‘*piobaireachd*’ as: “A term used since the eighteenth century to denote that part of the Highland bagpipe repertoire known otherwise as *ceòl mór* (‘great music’) or a single item of that repertoire” (Cooke n.d). ‘*Ceòl mór*’ is a term that translates literally to ‘big music’, which scholars have suggested is used by Gaelic speakers to denote a particular Highland bagpipe repertoire that follows a relatively strict musical form (Cannon 1988: 46). Neither ‘*ceòl mór*’ nor ‘*ceòl beag*’ are terms commonly used by pipers today. Rather, ‘*piobaireachd*’ has come to replace ‘*ceòl mór*’ as title for that repertoire, while ‘light music’ has come to replace ‘*ceòl beag*’ (Cannon 1988: 46; Cooke 1975-1976: 93; Dickson 2006: 8; Donaldson 2005: 27). Such a change may have been facilitated by the nineteenth century publication of ‘*ceòl mór*’ music scores that featured *piobaireachd* in their title (Cooke n.d). Thus ‘*piobaireachd*’ is synonymous with ‘pibroch’, with ‘*ceòl mór*’ and with ‘big music’, all of which are considered to refer to the same repertoire of music for the Highland bagpipe. ‘*Piobaireachd*’ is the most accepted and commonly used term used to describe this music to pipers (Cannon 1988: 46).

³ Further material regarding the origins of *piobaireachd* can be found in Cheape (1999, 2008), Dickson (2006, 2009) and Donaldson (2000, 2005).

⁴ Today, *piobaireachd* and light music are the predominant categories of repertoire considered ‘traditional’ for the Highland bagpipe, implying a division between traditional repertoire and presumably modern repertoire.

⁵ Refer to (Agnew 2001: 1) and Wellington Independent (1848: 3) for two known early examples of Highland bagpiping within New Zealand.

⁶ This may be due to a number of factors, including: (1) Highland pipers were not present, refuted by some (Coleman 1996); (2) Highland piping was not noteworthy, perhaps not as symbolic of Scottishness as it is today (Trevor-Roper 1983); (3) These communities were largely conservative Lowland Scottish Presbyterian who held Highland bagpipes in little regard, and therefore did not use them (Coleman 1996); and (4) records of Highland piping prior to 1863 may not have survived (Milosavljevic & Johnson 2012: 43).

⁷ At least from the perspective of New Zealand pipers.

⁸ Comprising at least 30% of events available for pipers to perform in.

⁹ Table 1. (Permission for the reproduction of this table is only granted when appropriate reference to source is used).

¹⁰ Including a 1995 issue of the British Journal of Ethnomusicology dedicated to *piobaireachd*, as well as new and reworked editions of older and rare manuscript collections.

¹¹ This paper is informed by a recently completed doctorate of philosophy by the author (Milosavljevic 2014).

¹² See Blankenhorn (1978), Cooke (1972), Haddow (1982) and Lorimer (1962, 1964).

¹³ The two most prestigious domestic *piobaireachd* events in New Zealand.

¹⁴ Interview data saturation was identified following the transcription of 8 out of 13 interviews, from a total of 17 potential interview participants. A preliminary and on-going thematic analysis during data transcription determined research focus and direction, and, using an inductive approach, further analysis allowed key themes to emerge. Primary emergent themes related to acceptable aural characteristics of an ideal performance and the relationship between *piobaireachd* in New Zealand and *piobaireachd* in Scotland.

¹⁵ Participant observations were gathered during a variety of local contexts, namely pedagogy, rehearsal and performance.

¹⁶ The author has over 22 years worth of experience as a performing Highland bagpiper in New Zealand, and has been involved in *piobaireachd* for most of that time.

¹⁷ This is accepted as providing suitable external validity, allowing for a triangulation of accurate and reliable results (Atkinson & Hammersley 2007: 126, 131; Fetterman 2010: 94; Yin 1994: 92).

¹⁸ Such an argument is sympathetic with the work of (in chronological order) Wagner (1981), Bloch (1977), Appadurai (1981), Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983), Trevor-Roper (1983), Anderson (1983), Rosenberg (1993), Moore (2002), and Mallon (2010), who argue for the social construction of the cultural past.

¹⁹ See Dickson (2006), Grant (2013), Ho Wai-Chung (2001), Loten (1995), McKerrell (2005), and Milosavljevic (2009).

²⁰ While it could be argued that inclusion of 'musicking' (Small 1998) is unnecessary, and while performers are indeed primarily focused on performance, interviews and participant observations were conducted in other important *piobaireachd* contexts, such as those relating to pedagogy and rehearsal. 'In this context 'musicking' is a suitable term that acknowledges the influence of pedagogy and rehearsal (among others) on performance, encompassing widespread engagement with *piobaireachd*.

²¹ Aside from competition, performance opportunities exist in recital format. However, recital performance opportunities are much fewer in number than competitive performance opportunities; and at any rate are, for the most part, governed by competitive performance standards.

²² In New Zealand, such documents are provided to all pipers following competitive performance and indicate the components of sound that comprise *piobaireachd*. Gathered from the Gold Medal *Piobaireachd* event, Hawke's Bay Easter Highland Games, Hastings, 7-8 April 2012. Source: author. (Permission for the reproduction of this figure is only granted when appropriate reference to source is used).

²³ In terms of distribution, variety and cost.

²⁴ An example of a modern elaborate moisture control system, allowing pipers to alter amount of air and moisture content of air going to each reed. This particular system provides a tube to the chanter and drone stocks. Within the red canister the tubes are attached to four chambers, one for each reed. Often canister chambers are filled with 'kitty litter' (Calcium Bentonite granules), which extracts moisture content from the air being supplied to the reeds, prolonging the length of time a piper may perform for before moisture accumulates and influences instrument sound. Source: Ross Bagpipe Bags Pty. Ltd. (n.d). (Reproduction of this image requires the rights holder's permission).

²⁵ Perhaps a comparative acoustic analysis, such as that of McKerrell (2005, 2011) would offer quantifiable data allowing for comparison of such potential localisation.

²⁶ This observation appears to be supported by McKerrell who gives little consideration to technical sound in his study of sound aesthetics for competitive solo pipers in Scotland (McKerrell 2005).

²⁷ A *crunluath* is an advanced variety of ornament generally reserved for use in *piobaireachd*.

²⁸ A subsequent paper will consider the contemporary 'authenticity' of *piobaireachd* in New Zealand through a historical approach, exposing parallels to Dickson (2006).

²⁹ Source: McHugh (n.d). (Reproduction of this image requires the rights holder's permission).

³⁰ However, considerable debate has focused on the 'right' finger technique for 'quality' Highland piping technical sounds. In particular contention regarding whether straight (rigid) or curved (relaxed) fingers, and 'heavy' or 'light' styles of ornamentation are 'best' remain somewhat unresolved and ongoing (Cannon 1988: 32-36, 82-84; Donaldson 2005: 8-14; MacKenzie 2014: 11-17; MacNeill & Pearston 1953; Matheson 2014: 29-36). Such debate indicates a strong link between sound aesthetics and processes of social authentication.

³¹ An acoustic analysis may reveal greater evidence for localisation, but was beyond the scope of this research.

³² The analysis of descriptions and reviews of recordings, published manuscript collections, competitions, festivals, pedagogical sessions (workshops), and other reception materials; as well as competitive report sheets, tutors notes, and score annotations could yield interesting results regarding expression concepts. However, such study remains to be conducted and was not a part of the methodology for the research informing this paper.

³³ Gathered from the Piping and Dancing Association of New Zealand - Otago Centre Regional Solo Piping Contest, Dunedin, 2-3 June 2012. Source: author. (Permission for the reproduction of this figure is only granted when appropriate reference to source is used).

³⁴ McKerrell (2009) suggests a 'New Zealand style' of performance where he considers pipers in New Zealand subscribe to the 'Nicol/Brown' style (McKerrell 2009: 284). Paradoxically, while many interview participants in the current study described influence from the Nicol/Brown style, they did not confirm sole adherence to this, often citing a number of other stylistic influences. McKerrell's findings appear to stem from a study informed by interviews with culture bearers within Scotland (McKerrell 2005), while this study's findings derive from a differing group of culture bearers within a differing context. Some interview participants indicated influence from the Nicol/Brown style, yet results suggest that this was not a defining feature of *piobaireachd* within New Zealand, and that other styles were also evident. Such debate suggests potential direction for future research. Nevertheless, this discussion indicates the common association of 'style' with certain authoritative figures, and also confirms a transcultural level of authenticity for *piobaireachd* in New Zealand (McKerrell 2009: 284).

³⁵ McKerrell's (2005, 2011) and Spicer's (2001) acoustic research on Highland bagpipe sound go some way to establishing authentic sound for Highland bagpiping, but are limited in their inclusion of *piobaireachd* and Highland piping beyond Scotland.

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Dr Daniel Milosavljevic currently teaches popular music and world music studies at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. His recently completed doctorate of philosophy (University of Otago) investigated *piobaireachd* within New Zealand. The current paper in this periodical is resultant from such study, and further publications are expected in the near

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